

River Literature

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain
Viking Penguin, New York. 1953 *Grades: 6-Adult*

A boy and a runaway slave travel the Mississippi on a raft in an exciting and sometimes dangerous trip. The Mississippi River influenced much of Twain's work, even his pen-name (from a riverboat working command). While the language and dialect reflect their time, and can be discussed in class, Twain's humanity comes through.

Biography of a River: The Living Mississippi by Edith McCall
Walker and Co., New York. 1990 *Grades: 6-12*

This "biography" details stories of human interactions with the Mississippi, from Native Americans, European explorers, and immigrant settlers to modern engineers and dam-builders. The river "speaks" in the first person in the opening chapter. The emphasis on the "living" nature of the river underscores an important environmental lesson.

Flood: Wrestling with the Mississippi by Patricia Lauber
National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C. 1996 *Grades 5-12*

Flood... explains that the Mississippi's dynamic nature is to change its course, re-arrange the land, and leave its banks, occasionally causing great flooding. We try to control the river, but are not always successful. Well illustrated. The book asks how we should manage the Mississippi's future, but falls short of a full look at restoration and alternatives.

Geography of the Earth by Susan Brooks
Oxford University Press, London & New York. 1991
This children's atlas has nice illustrations of landforms that show rivers and mountains.

Historical Atlas of the Earth by Stephen Jay Gould, et. al.
Henry Holt Reference Book, Henry Holt & Co. 1996
This large beautifully illustrated book describes the evolution of Earth landscapes to the present. Forces shaping the Earth, evolution of life, and ecosystems are depicted.

Minn of the Mississippi by Holling Clancy Holling
Houghton Mifflin, Boston. 1951 *Grades: 5-9*
The journey of Minn, a snapping turtle, is followed from northern Minnesota to the bayous of Louisiana. The turtle's adventures with people, animals, and the changing seasons are vividly described, and bring the river's history to life. Wonderful drawings and maps accompany the story. Newbery honor book.

Mississippi by Diane Siebert, illustrated by Greg Harlin
Harper Collins. 2001 *Grades: 1-6*
A poetic journey down the length and breadth of the Mississippi River, this picture book depicts the origins, nature, human interactions and changes of the great river.

The Mississippi River (Ecosystems of North America series) by Maria Mudd Ruth
Benchmark Books/Marshall Cavendish, Tarrytown, New York. 2001 *Grades: 4-10*
An excellent exploration of how the Mississippi River works ecologically, this well illustrated book examines the relationship between the river and its backwaters, floodplains, watershed, delta, plant life, animal life, and human life. Poses questions of

the river's future, articulates key science concepts, includes activities, glossary, and references.

Mississippi River: A Journey Down the Father of Waters by Peter Lourie

Boyd's Mills Press, Honesdale, PA. 2000 *Grades 4-9*

Author Peter Lourie travels the modern Mississippi by canoe and over land from Lake Itasca to the delta. Feel the river change from a peaceful shallow marsh to an industrial ocean port. Along the way you will travel through a navigation lock, explore historic sites, share the river with mighty barges, and hunker down for a hurricane in New Orleans.

Our Endangered Planet: Rivers and Lakes by Mary Hoff and Mary M. Rogers

Lerner Publications, Minneapolis. 1991 *Grades: 4-9*

A global look at the importance of water and its stewardship. Many illustrations and photographs communicate key water concepts, such as "we all live downstream."

Painting the Dakota: Seth Eastman at Fort Snelling by Marybeth Lorbiecki

Afton Historical Society Press, Afton, MN. 2000 *Grades: 4-adult*

Extraordinary watercolor paintings by an Army lieutenant depict Dakota Indian life in the area around Fort Snelling and the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers during the early-mid 1800s. From prairie and river landscapes to images of hunting, gardening and village life, Eastman's paintings and Lorbiecki's text bring the reader closer to the life and customs of the Dakota at a turning point both in their history and that of the Minnesota landscape. A useful complement to the book is the video, "Seth Eastman: Painting the Dakota," which includes the commentary of Dakota people (produced by Twin Cities Public Television and Afton Historical Society Press).

A River Ran Wild: An Environmental History by Lynne Cherry

Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, San Diego. 1992 *Grades: 1-5*

True story of the Nashua River Valley in North-Central Massachusetts from the time that the Native Americans settled there, naming it River With the Pebbled Bottom. The book traces the impact of the industrial revolution on the river and the eventual clean-up campaign mounted by a local watershed association.

The River That Gave Gifts: An Afro-American Story by Margo Humphrey

Children's Book Press, San Francisco. 1987 *Grades: K-5*

Four children in an African village make gifts for wise old Neema. Yanava does not know what to give and seeks inspiration from the river. In addition to themes of respect for elders and validity of different kinds of achievement, the river is portrayed as a source of power.

Rivers (Make It Work! series) by Andrew Haslam & Barbara Taylor

Two-Can Publishing, London. 1996 *Grades: 4-9*

Hands-on science and geography models and experiments fill this colorful, practical book about rivers and their features. Explores water cycle, river sources, drainage patterns, waterfalls, dams, deltas, human uses of rivers, flooding, managing rivers, and more.

Water by Luna Leopold, Kenneth Davis, et. al.

Life Science Library, Time Incorporated, New York, 1996

This book contains a wealth of up-to-date information about water science.

The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame; illustrated by Ernest Shepard

Aerie Books, New York. 1988 *Grades: 4-adult*

This wonderful, humorous classic, filled with the curious lives of eccentric animal characters, takes place along a river. The scenic descriptions accurately reflect the habitats of each animal. While the book is often read out loud to younger children, the pace and comic conversations makes it highly entertaining for adults.